

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A small utility vehicle, comprising:
 - a vehicle frame;
 - a transaxle having a casing attached to said frame;
 - a pair of axles extending along a common axis, each of said axles rotatably disposed in and having a portion extending from said transaxle casing;
 - a pair of wheels, each of said wheels rotationally fixed to a respective one of said axles;
 - a pair of brake discs, each of said brake discs having a collar portion defining an opening therethrough, each of said brake discs being mounted on a respective one of said axles, said axles extending through said collar portion openings, and said brake discs disposed between a respective one of said wheels and said transaxle casing, each of said brake discs being rotationally fixedly engaged to a respective one of said wheels; and
 - a pair of braking mechanisms externally mounted on said transaxle casing proximate to a location where a respective one of said axles extends from said transaxle casing, each of said braking mechanisms being brakingly engageable with a respective one of said braking discs.
2. The vehicle of Claim 1 wherein said braking discs are positioned on said axles at locations where said axles have a solid cylindrical shape.
3. The vehicle of Claim 2 wherein surfaces on said braking discs and said axles in direct engagement permit relative rotation between said braking discs and said axles and said wheels are rotationally fixed relative to both said braking discs and said axles whereby said braking discs are rotationally fixed relative to said axles.
4. The vehicle of Claim 3 wherein said braking discs each have at least one lug projecting parallel to said common axis, said lugs rotationally fixing said braking discs to said wheels.
5. The vehicle of Claim 1, wherein each of said braking mechanisms applies braking force to each of said axles simultaneously.
6. The vehicle of Claim 1, wherein each of said braking mechanisms applies braking force to each of said axles independently.
7. The vehicle of Claim 1, wherein each of said braking mechanisms contains a pair of friction pucks disposed respectively adjacent each side of one of said brake discs.

8. The vehicle of Claim 7, wherein each of said braking mechanisms comprises a housing in which said friction pucks are disposed, said housings externally mounted on said transaxle casing proximal to the location at which said axles extend therefrom.

9. The vehicle of Claim 1, wherein said transaxle is a hydrostatic transaxle.

10. The vehicle of Claim 1, wherein said transaxle is a gear-type transaxle.

11. A transaxle for a small utility vehicle comprising:
a transaxle casing;
a pair of axles extending along a common axis, each of said axles rotatably disposed in and having a portion extending from said transaxle casing;
a pair of wheels, each of said wheels rotationally fixed to a respective one of said axles;

a pair of brake discs, each of said brake discs having a centrally disposed collar with an opening therethrough, each of said brake discs being mounted on a respective one of said axles with said axles extending through said openings, said brake discs disposed between a respective one of said wheels and said transaxle housing; and

a pair of braking mechanisms externally mounted on said transaxle casing proximate to a location where a respective one of said axles extends from said transaxle casing, each of said braking mechanisms comprising a brake arm having a cam surface that presses at least one friction puck against a respective brake disc when said brake arm is actuated.

12. The vehicle of Claim 11 wherein said braking discs are positioned on said axles at locations where said axles have a solid cylindrical shape.

13. The vehicle of Claim 12 wherein surfaces on said braking discs and said axles in direct engagement permit relative rotation between said braking discs and said axles and said wheels are rotationally fixed relative to both said braking discs and said axles whereby said braking discs are rotationally fixed relative to said axles.

14. The vehicle of Claim 13 wherein said braking discs each have at least one lug projecting parallel to said common axis, said lugs rotationally fixing said braking discs to said wheels.

15. The vehicle of Claim 11, wherein each of said braking mechanisms applies braking force to each of said axles simultaneously.

16. The vehicle of Claim 11, wherein each of said braking mechanisms applies braking force to each of said axles independently.

10922875-030702

17. A method of assembling a vehicle comprising:
providing a vehicle frame;
attaching a transaxle assembly to said frame, said transaxle assembly including a transaxle casing and a pair of axles rotatably disposed in and extending from said transaxle casing;
mounting a pair of braking mechanisms to an exterior of said transaxle casing;
mounting a pair of braking discs to said axles, said braking discs being relatively rotational with respect to said axles, said discs being brakingly engageable by said braking mechanisms;
mounting a pair of wheels to said axles after mounting said braking discs to said axles, said mounting of said wheels including rotationally fixing said wheels relative to a respective one of said axles and rotationally fixing said wheels to a respective one of said braking discs whereby mounting of said wheels rotationally fixes said braking discs to said axles.

18. The method of Claim 17 wherein mounting said braking discs comprises positioning said braking discs on said axles at locations where said axles have a solid cylindrical shape.

19. The method of Claim 17 wherein said braking discs are provided with lugs and said wheels are provided with corresponding recesses and said mounting of said wheels comprises engaging said lugs with said corresponding recesses to rotationally fix said wheels and said braking discs.